Published for the Residents of Lafayette
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# LAFAYETTE VISTAS

## THE BURNING QUESTION ABOUT YOUR HOME

*How can local residents avert a Lafayette Firestorm?*

With 360 degrees of lush hillside vistas, Lafayette is one of the Bay Area's most beautiful communities. Nestled in deeply forested hills, the homes of Lafayette are tucked away along secluded, winding streets.

Our community shares many unsettling similarities with a handful of communities just a few tree-covered ridges away: the once heavily wooded neighborhoods of Hiller Highlands, Broadway Terrace and Grizzly Peak.

Aerial photo of the devastation created by the Oakland Firestorm.

"In many ways, the topography of Lafayette and the Oakland Hills is identical," says Mike Argo, assistant fire chief at the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (CCCFPD). "The same thing that happened to them could happen to us.

"With the rain we've had this year, the plant growth is phenomenal," adds Argo. "We've got mustard plant on Mt. Diablo eight feet high! If we have a hot, late summer, we're going to have a tremendous amount of fuel on the hills."

As spokesperson for the CCCFPD, which is responsible for preventing fires in Lafayette and surrounding communities, Argo encourages residents to take a serious look at fire prevention before the potentially fire-devastating months of summer and fall.

According to Argo, the biggest issue facing residents is proper abatement around their homes. Uncleared brush and unpruned trees can act as fuses, leading fire directly to the homes.

"Removal of highly combustible vegetation from around your home significantly reduces the risk of an exterior fire spreading to your house," says Argo. "Dry and dead vegetation is easily ignited and can burn like kindling."

In addition to maintaining the existing landscape, homeowners may even want to consider removing highly flammable plants, like cypress, eucalyptus, junipers, pines and other conifers. By properly maintaining your landscape and planting fire retardant plants, you can create a "safe zone" around your home.

Residents should also look closely at how well their homes are identified. Check to see if your address is clearly visible from the street. An obvious, oversized address will help fire fighters as well as medical personal find your home quickly in case of emergencies.

To help residents put together a do-it-yourself fire prevention plan that includes these and many other fire safety tips designed specifically for Lafayette, the CCCFPD offers free fire prevention information. For a comprehensive packet of fire safety guidelines, call the Exterior Hazard Control Division at 930-5581.

## *Top 10 Fireproofing Tips*

1. **ABATEMENT** – Keep flammable vegetation 50 feet from your house, 100 feet back if you're on a slope. Periodically remove pine needles from your roof.
2. **ADDRESS** – Your address should be clearly visible from the street. If you have a street sign on your property, prune trees and shrubs around the sign to improve its visibility.
3. **ACCESSIBILITY** – To ensure that the fire department can reach your home, clear private roads and driveways of shrubbery and overhanging limbs.
4. **SPARK ARRESTERS** – Install approved spark arresters on your chimneys.
5. **LANDSCAPING** – For new landscaping or re-landscaping jobs, use drought-resistant, fire-retardant plants.
6. **ROOFING** – For new home-builders and re-roofing jobs, a minimum Class C fire-retardant roof is required.
7. **BOXING EAVES** – Rather than having exposed rafters, box the eaves with any solid material (wood or preferably stucco) to create a non-combustible, flush surface.
8. **DECK AND BALCONIES** – Box in exposed wood decks and balconies, especially if they are cantilevered over a slope.
9. **FIREWOOD** – Store firewood at least 10 feet from your house.
10. **SMOKE DETECTORS** – If you haven't done so already, install a smoke detector.

# Property Tax Deprived

## *What does it mean and how does it impact you?*

When Lafayette was incorporated in 1968, proponents of cityhood resolved that our community could manage without a city property tax. For Lafayette residents, incorporation provided local zoning control. The thought of no city property taxes added to the appeal of incorporation.

To our early civic leaders, it seemed feasible that Lafayette could cover its basic city services with the 1% it received on sales tax and the small fee it collected from the state on automobile registration. The plan was adequate while Lafayette was in its early stages of development, but as the city grew the funds became tighter. Then in 1978, the passing of Proposition 13 shattered our property-tax-free status.

Fed up with rising property taxes and a $6 billion state budget surplus, California voters resoundingly approved Proposition 13 in 1978. This new legislation substantially reduced property taxes for most communities by establishing a uniform rate of property tax throughout California of $1 per $100 of assessed property value. Lafayette homeowners, who had previously paid no property taxes to the city, now had to pay the same rate as every other California homeowner.

Along with Prop 13 came AB 8, an act of the State Legislature that defined the division of the new, "lower" total proceeds. When it came time to divvy up the reduced monies, the County, other cities, schools and special districts such as fire and sanitation were granted the funds. There was no provision for cities such as Lafayette that were not levying a property tax. Although its homeowners were now paying the same rate as every other California homeowner, the City of Lafayette received no property tax revenue.

Lafayette is not alone in its tax plight. There are 30 other California cities that are property tax deprived: Lafayette and Pleasant Hill are the only such cities in Northern California.

A lack of sidewalks is one result of Lafayette's property-tax-deprived status.

For Lafayette, this tax status squeezes fundamental public services and classifies Lafayette as "a limited service city." Our community has just one small city park, a modest community center, limited police protection, no city hall, and limited street and storm sewer maintenance. These are just a few of the basic city elements that are restricted or missing from Lafayette's landscape because of our property-tax-deprived status.

But all is not lost. In 1988, the California Legislature passed a law that was designed to phase-in assistance to those cities that have been deprived of property tax revenue. Starting in 1989, Lafayette received the equivalent of 1% of all property taxes collected from its homeowners, or about $140,000. This allocation was scheduled to increase to 2% in the second year, 3% in the third year, and so on until the seventh year (1995), when the percentage would peak and the city would receive the equivalent of 7% of the property taxes that the homeowners pay.

While this sounds great at first blush, the average city receives 19% of the property taxes, or roughly three times what Lafayette may ultimately receive.

The difficult task of balancing the state budget may affect Lafayette's new revenues. Since these monies come from the State General Fund, the dollars earmarked for Lafayette are attacked by other groups seeking state funds for their own interests. In 1990, for instance, the city was scheduled to receive 2% of property tax revenues but the state cut the allocation to less than 1% to balance its own budget.

Even if the plan is fully funded, the revenue that Lafayette will receive over the next few years is relatively small compared to other cities. Likewise, the tentative nature of the funding makes budgeting difficult. As long as our current property tax status is in place, Lafayette will continue to be a property-tax-deprived city with limited public services. Remember, "No Tax City" does not refer to what the residents pay, but rather to what the city receives.

# Park Progress

Responding to the outpouring of community interest and a need for more youth playing fields, the City Council appointed the "Park Lands Blue Ribbon Task Force" in August 1991 to conduct an in-depth examination on the subject of developing city parks.

By querying residents and through scientific research techniques, the 16-member task force is gathering information on the myriad of issues relating to community parks and recreational facilities. To carefully study the matter, the citizen task force is divided into three subcommittees: Survey, Site and Finance.

The Survey Committee has asked a professional research firm to conduct telephone interviews with 400 randomly selected Lafayette residents to determine the community's recreational needs and desires. The results of this survey will provide the foundation for the park proposal.

To pinpoint prime park locations, the Site Committee is carrying out an exhaustive search and has considered roughly 34 sites for park development. The committee continues to look at publicly and privately owned lands in all neighborhoods.

The Finance Committee is examining the costs of developing and maintaining recreational facilities, and will recommend funding alternatives to pay for any proposals that might eventually be approved by the City Council.

The task force, made up of a cross section of Lafayette residents representing a range of interests, will incorporate its findings into a report which will be presented to the City Council on or before June 22, 1992.

# Lamorinda Gridlock

Faced with an ever-increasing stream of traffic through its communities, Lamorinda (Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda) launched an in-depth traffic study in 1991 to develop practical solutions to the tri-cities' transportation woes.

The Lamorinda Traffic Study is formally described as a study "...to identify actions and measures to mitigate the traffic congestion between Highway 24 and the town of Moraga, including cost benefits, analysis and implementation..."

Both the study and its implementation are funded by Measure C, a county-wide transportation improvement and growth management program that was passed in 1988. Through Measure C, $19 million has been reserved to implement the study's recommendations.

The fundamental goal of the study, which is being directed by Barton-Aschman Associates, a transportation planning and traffic engineering firm, is to create a workable transportation plan for Lamorinda that will alleviate traffic congestion while still maintaining the rural character of the three cities. Barton-Aschman is being assisted with the study by a team of professional consultants and the Lamorinda Traffic Study Project Management Committee (LPMC), which is composed of elected officials and city staff from the three communities.

***Residents can play an active role in the Lamorinda Traffic Study by attending a free workshop on May 19***

The big question that the Lamorinda Traffic Study must answer: How can traffic congestion be reduced on the major arterial roads extending through Lafayette and Orinda without increasing capacity and at the same time provide freeway access to land-locked Moraga?

To tackle this monumental task, the traffic study has been divided into three phases: 1) identifying existing conditions and transportation problem areas; 2) identifying transportation strategies and programs, and testing those options to determine their effectiveness and impact; and 3) developing a final plan.

The first phase of the program is underway. In addition to collecting data and analyzing the existing road conditions, the study group is reviewing previous research, defining local

*(continued on back page)*

# Milestones

*"Milestones" will appear in each issue of Lafayette Vistas and will provide you with a schedule of upcoming city issues and an update on past city business.*

***Fall 1991***

**PARKS** – The City Council created a Blue Ribbon Task Force to evaluate community needs regarding the development of local parks and recreational facilities.

**CITY OFFICES** – The City Offices and Police Services moved to a new location: 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

**LAMORINDA TRAFFIC** – The City Council gave the go-ahead to conduct the Lamorinda Traffic Study which is designed to find ways to alleviate traffic congestion in the three communities.

**NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS** – Two new City Council members were installed.

***Winter 1991/92***

**PARKING LOCK BOXES** – The City installed lock boxes to collect parking fees on Happy Valley Road, Oak Hill Road and First Street.

**FIX-A-GRAMS** – Residents identified 275 "fix-its" for the Public Works department, ranging from road work to drainage to missing street signs. The city has fixed 230 to date.

**RELIEZ STATION ROAD IMPROVEMENTS** – The City Council gave approval to a series of physical improvements to this congested road, including a traffic signal at Richelle Court. These improvements are being funded by your Measure C taxes.

**NO SMOKING** – A new ordinance was passed which, with few exceptions, prohibits smoking in the work place.

***Coming Up Spring 1992***

**LAMORINDA TRAFFIC WORKSHOP** – The next Lamorinda traffic workshop will be held May 19 at 7:30 pm at the Soda Center at St. Mary's College in Moraga. Residents are encouraged to attend and provide input.

**TELEVISED COUNCIL MEETING** – An upcoming forum of the City Council will be broadcast on cable television. The question-and-answer format of the one-hour program will encourage residents to call in and have their questions answered on air. Tentative broadcast date is in June.

**DOWNTOWN PARKING METERS** – The City Council will consider new parking meters for the downtown area as part of this year's budget deliberations.

**UPDATE OF THE GENERAL PLAN** – The City Council and the Planning Commission will continue to discuss plans to revise Lafayette's "constitution" or General Plan through the spring and summer.

***May 26 1992***

**CITY BUDGET** – Tentative date for public hearing on proposed 1992-93 city budget.

***June 1992***

**PARKS** – The Park Lands Blue Ribbon Task Force will present its findings to the City Council.

# DEDICATION

This issue of Lafayette Vistas is dedicated to Planning Director Carlos Anglin, who passed away on March 28, 1992.

Carlos played an instrumental role in many of the issues addressed in this publication. He worked for the City of Lafayette for 14 years and was dedicated to preserving the rich quality of life our community enjoys. The ideas and programs Carlos initiated have greatly enriched Lafayette. His humor, compassion, and tireless devotion to this community will be missed. To his wife, Michelle, children Mike and Gretchen and other family and friends, we, the City Council and staff of Lafayette, extend our deepest sympathies.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Carlos Anglin Memorial Fund, c/o Bill Ostrom, 655 Broadmoor, San Leandro, CA 94577. Proceeds will be used to create a memorial displaying one of Carlos' beautiful sculptures.

## LAMORINDA GRIDLOCK *(continued from page 3)*

transportation goals and identifying important local transportation issues.

In phase one, the geographic study area has been defined as the road network south of Highway 24 and those links and intersections providing access to Highway 24 from the Lamorinda areas south of the highway. The study's initial report has also identified 53 heavily congested intersections, improvement options, traffic counts, traffic safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists, arterial side streets with inadequate access, traffic speed and noise, accident locations and overall congestion issues.

A summary of Phase One will be completed following a public workshop to be held on May 19, 1992 at St. Mary's college (see "Milestones"). Workshop organizers encourage all residents to attend and to participate by offering constructive community input.

The solutions to this complex problem are as long and intricate as the nearly 250 miles of roadway that wind through Lamorinda. While the traffic study is reaching the completion of Phase One, it still has many miles to go. In the next issue of Lafayette Vistas, we will report on Phase Two of the study.

Bicyclists and motorists alike are hoping the Lamorinda Traffic Study can help reduce traffic congestion.

## CITY DIRECTORY

### *Officers*

| | |
|---|---|
| Donald L.Tatzin | **Mayor** |
| Scott Talan | **Vice Mayor** |
| Anne Grodin | **Council Member** |
| Ivor Samson | **Council Member** |
| Gayle B. Uilkema | **Council Member** |

*The City Council meets at 7:30 pm on the second and fourth Monday of the month at the Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Road.*

### *Staff*

| | |
|---|---|
| Robert F.D. Adams | **City Manager** |
| Steven Falk | **Assist. City Manager** |
| Sue Jusaitis | **City Clerk** |
| Mark Lander | **City Engineer** |
| Jennifer Russell | **Parks and Recreation Director** |
| Ed McNair | **Public Works Superintendent** |
| Mike Weymouth | **Police Services Mgr.** |

### *City Offices and Police*

| | |
|---|---|
| Street Address: | **3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite 210** |
| Mailing Address: | **P.O. Box 1968 Lafayette, CA 94549-1968** |

### *City Telephone Numbers*

| | |
|---|---|
| Administration: | **284-1968** |
| Engineering: | **284-1951** |
| Planning: | **284-1976** |
| Parks and Rec: | **284-2232** |
| Public Works: | **283-6271** |
| Senior Services: | **284-5050** |
| Police Business: | **284-5010** |
| Police Emergency: | **911** |


## LAFAYETTE VISTAS

is published for the residents of Lafayette and reports on issues, people and events that affect our city. As a member of this community, you are encouraged to contact us with your questions and comments. We request all correspondence be sent to:

The Editor, Lafayette Vistas
City of Lafayette
P.O. Box 1968
Lafayette, CA 94549-1968
510-284-1968 • FAX: 510-284-3169



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